



Med-Alert

The 5th Brigade (HS) Newsletter

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THE COLONEL'S CORNER

THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN STARTING IN 2002

WASHINGTON (July 5, 2001) -- Beginning in January 2002, active duty and Ready Reserve soldiers can invest up to seven percent of their basic pay in a Thrift Savings Plan, plus all special, incentive, or bonus payments, up to the IRS 402(g) limitation, which is \$10,500.

Congress provided the uniformed services an opportunity to join the Federal Employees Thrift Savings Plan in the Floyd D Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001.

The Thrift Savings Plan allows soldiers to invest pre-tax dollars and reduces taxable income by not taxing investments and earnings until they are withdrawn. Participation in the program is optional.

Service members will have their first opportunity to elect to participate during a special 60-day open season beginning October 9, 2001 with deductions beginning in January 2002.

After the initial open season, service members have the opportunity to contribute during regular TSP Open Seasons, which are November 15 through January 31, and May 15 through July 31 of each year. New soldiers have 60-days to enroll and each open season thereafter.

Soldiers must contribute from basic pay in order to be eligible to elect to contribute from special, incentive or bonus payments. Soldiers who are contributing to the TSP may elect to contribute up to 100% of bonuses at any time.

The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board website www.tsp.gov has a section of Q's and A's that answer some of the basic questions about the TSP for members of the uniformed services. The Army has also provided briefing slides with notes about the program, which are posted on the [AR-PERSCOM website](#) and the [DOD website](#).

DOD officials are working with the Defense Finance and Accounting Service and the thrift investment board to determine how to best implement the program. A DOD Directive will be published soon to providing details on the program. Forms and educational materials will be provided to soldiers during the open season so they can make an informed choice.

Initially, all soldier investments will go to the G Fund - U.S. Government Securities; however, the TSP allows employees to invest in any or all of three funds: a government bond fund, a corporate bond fund and a stock fund. Effective May 1, 2001, participants will have two additional investment funds, an international and small-capitalization stock investment fund.

Contact your local pay office for more information or submit your questions to the Thrift Savings Plan website at www.tsp.gov.

FROM THE COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR

Noncommissioned officers must be developed and take responsibility for the training and the performance of their soldiers of the 5th Brigade (HS). The quality of training and the level of expertise of the NCOs are critical to mission accomplishment. The army needs NCOs who sustain their ability to look beyond peacetime concerns and who can execute our wartime missions even after long periods of peace. Administrative activities are important, but they must not take priority over realistic combat training. NCOs must develop soldiers who are proficient in battlefield skills, well disciplined, physically tough, and highly motivated. NCO training programs must result in demonstrated tactical and technical competence, confidence, and initiative. Never forget the army exists to deter war or, if deterrence fails, to reestablish peace through victory in combat wherever U.S. (United States) interests are challenged.

More information is available in the Noncommissioned Officer Development Program (NCODP) memorandum dated 15 May, 2001, signed by CSM Habelman.

FROM THE HHD COMMANDER

Please welcome the following personnel to the command:

MAJ Rose Bean (S-1 Section)
SSG Sylvia Gibson (S-3 Section)

FROM THE SSA

Please ensure that you submit your orders for certification of pay after your duty is performed.

TIDBITS (FROM MR. CAROFILIS)



FREE MONEY FOR COLLEGE - Military.com's education services has a listing of \$300 million in scholarship funds. All personnel in the military community, including dependents, are encouraged to search the scholarship database. In addition to the scholarship search available, the educational services also provide comprehensive and updated information on educational benefits, such as the G.I. Bill, Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP), and Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program. To access these education services, visit: <http://www.military.com/Careers/Education/0,11754,112,00.html>

THANKS TO ALL - Having completed our prime training period and doing it very successfully, I wanted to share with you the pride that I feel in our unit and our soldiers. Each unit completed their training missions in a very professional manner. They provided excellent classes and took care of each and every student. The accreditation team has given a first look at every class and was very complementary of the quality of instruction. I see a lot of very caring, involved leaders. My thanks to all.

COMBAT MEDIC RUN - On Saturday 28 July, FT Sam Houston was the site of the Annual Combat Medic Run. Over 3,000 participants attended the event. They took part in various events including individual and team runs. Our very own 5th Brigade registered in the 5K unit run. LTC Lee, MAJ Villareal, MAJ Birdwell, MSG Holguin and SPC Cortez ably represented us and carried the unit guidon from beginning to end. Thanks to you for stepping forward and doing such a great job above what is required.



SAFETY - Without any doubt, you all know that is it very, very hot this time of year in South Texas. As

leaders we are charged with insuring the safety of our troops. During this heat wave, let's take extra precautions and be extra observant of any signs of heat problems in our soldiers. Even during IDT we must be vigilant in preventing heat problems.

NEW RESERVE CENTER CONSTRUCTION - Construction of the new Reserve Center next to the 5501st started this month and is scheduled to continue until next September. Please stay away from the construction area. It is off limits to unauthorized personnel. As you can see for yourself, the parking lots have been torn up creating a parking shortage. Due to this situation, the MP's will not ticket personnel who park on the grass. However, you must use caution when parking in the grassy areas. Do not use the grassy areas in front of the Center and be very careful if it is raining or wet (wishful thinking).

GOVERNMENT CARD PROGRAM - Bank of America has decided to enforce their new policies regarding the Government Travel Card. Here are a list of the highlights:

Immediate changes:

- Salary Offset - Debts will be taken from your next available pay (cardholders who are 90 days late)
- Increased cash advance fees - 3%
- Late fee was \$20 after 120 days now \$29 after 75 days
- Returned checks are now \$29

Changes effective next month:

- Expeditious delivery fee (FED-EX) \$20 (effective 15 SEP 01)

Changes just down the road (possibly OCT 01):

Other projected changes will be to the card limits. These have not yet changed but will in the near future.

- Cash & Credit limits - Standard card \$250 cash/\$2,500 credit
- Restricted cards \$125 cash/\$1,000 credit (These are down from \$400 cash/\$10,000 credit and \$250 cash/\$5,000 credit when the program started)

TATTOO POLICY

Here is the revised policy that is going into the revision to AR 670-1. "Any tattoo or brand that is prejudicial to good order and discipline is prohibited. Tattoos or brands on the face, neck, or head that are visible while wearing a class A or B uniform are prohibited. Tattoos or brands on other areas of the body that are visible while wearing a class A uniform, and that detract from



a soldierly appearance are prohibited.” If you have any questions regarding this policy, use your chain of command to obtain additional information.

CHANGE TO SERVICEMEMBER’S GROUP LIFE INSURANCE (SGLI)

The top rate of Servicemember’s Group Life Insurance (SGLI) automatically increased to \$250,000 effective April 1, 2001.

Current premium payment of \$.80 per \$10,000 of coverage will continue, resulting in an additional \$4.00 premium being withheld from each member’s pay for SGLI. As an example, for those members who had the maximum coverage amount of \$200,000, the premium payment per month was \$16.00. With the increase in coverage, the premium is now \$20.00 per month for the maximum coverage.

If any member desires a reduced amount of coverage, or no coverage, that member must prepare a new VA SGLV 8286, indicating the desired amount of coverage, or no coverage.

3457TH CIP REMINDER

The Bde staff, under the leadership of LTC Lee, will be conducting the Command Inspection Program (CIP) for the 3457th on 8 September 01.

90-DAY EVENT CALENDAR

11-12 August	10th Bn CIP
11-12 August	3457th MTC & 10th Bn Drill
18-19 August	PND & Bde Drill
22-23 August	10th BN ISE Meeting
8-9 September	3457th MTC and 10th Bn Drill
8-10 September	10th Bn Instructors Workshop
8 September	3457th CIP (this is a change)
15-16 September	HQs and PND Drill
15 September	PND CIP
13-14 October	3457th and 10th Bn Drill
20-21 October	Hq’s and PND Drill
20-21 October	October APFT

YOUR CHAIN OF COMMAND

5th Brigade (HS)	
COL Angel Padilla	CSM Alfred Habelman

10th BN	
MAJ James Hickey	CSM Pascual Castro

3457th	
LTC Floyd Priester	CSM Vacant

PND	
MAJ Mary Gomez	CSM David Stading

HHD – 5th Brigade	
CPT Mario Avila	MSG Dan Carlin